UNIONISM - SOCIALISM

STRIKES DEVOUR MANY BILLIONS CONSUMER PAYS

Reviewed by GEORGE KENT.

THE HIGH COST OF STRIKES. By Marshal Olds. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

A STRIKE on the high seas, dignified by the word mutiny, has romantic associations for almost everybody. In the main this is due to the fact that such a strike means a bloody clash between the rebels and those in power, and a swift conclusion, with one or the other in power. Furthermore, strikes at sea are not fomented for high wages or shorter hours, although such have been known to happen, but for that intangible thing known as power.

Strikes ashore are sordid money matters, whose drama is the drama of a siege, infinitely inferior in this regard to those at sea, which are more in the nature of hand to hand battles. The former, however, have a greater significance and have a greater effect upon the generality of human beings than the other. They are visible evidence of the greatest of wars, the class war.

Marshal Olds, who has studied the phenomenon of the strike at first hand, treats the subject in its effect on the high cost of living. He shows by an array of figures which cover strikes in every industry during the period that followed the signing of the armistice how they have raised the cost of necessities. Although Mr. Olds has been "a laborer on a farm, assistant in a railroad repair shop, a dock walloper, working boss of a gang and assistant machinist, and except for hiring his own stenographer and occasionally an assistant, he has never been an employer," he believes labor is far more to blame for strikes than capital, not the rank and file, so much as the professional labor leader.

The writer shows that strikes have increased the cost of necessities to the ultimate consumer and caused a total loss of about a hundred billion dollars. Strikes have been the chief cause of the high cost of living. It is the author's belief that strikes are costly to the laboring man. One of the chief reasons he decries strikes is that a strike in one industry, where the grievance may be just, affects numerous other allied industries.

"There is no question," he writes, "that American employers, with their minds bent wholly on competition in production and sales, have in the past too often taken a ruthless advantage of labor when circumstances have put it in their power to do so. There is no question that the advantage labor has taken of the strategic position, which events of the last few years have given it, it is largely excused and justified in its own mind because of much of the past attitude of its employers. If the human relations in industry are to go on only on the basis of the law of the jungle—merely according to the primordial working out of the unmitigated cause and effect—if the whole relation between employer and employee is to consist of a watching and manœvring till circumstances put one or the other at a disadvantage in order that they may take their revenge or get all they can while the getting is good there is little hope that even with all its great efficiency our present day system of industrial management can last."

Mr. Olds looks on strikes as a violation of law and labor unions as trusts operating in the face of the law. He strongly emphasizes the value of the open shop and shows that where the open shop is in existence labor conditions and wages are better than in places maintaining the closed shop. He thinks well of Gov. Allen's industrial court and expresses even greater approval of the Canadian Mackenzie-King plan for settling industrial disputes.

He stresses the political power of labor and declares that the political problem is no more the domination of the boss, but this domination by the labor trust.

Readers may wonder what their favorite authors do with their spare time. Harold MacGrath in the *American Golfer* discloses how he spends some of his, in catching black bass at Cape Vincent, where he fishes every summer. He is a connoisseur of bait.

"Live bait, mind you; none of those murderous plugs I understand my old friend Bob Davis uses when he fishes with Ben Ames Williams. No, sir; live minnow, a four and a half ounce Leonard rod, ten foot length, a single turn reel. Never use anything but minnow. If I can't catch 'em with a minnow, I don't catch 'em; I want to catch 'em my way."

Labor unions as stabilizers

THE LABOR MOVEMENT. By Frank Tannenbaum. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

THIS book is a curious combination of scholarship and emotion, of calm historical presentation and of something at once personal and representative—plea and prophecy.

The author acknowledges aid from Columbia and New York University professors and from fellow workers in union organizations. The unions are a part of the structure of the modern world and it is important that the public should be thoroughly informed about them. Most of the books hitherto have been written from the outside point of view, however sympathetic. This is the word of one of the workers' own spokesmen.

The publisher's note—like some of the footnotes in Wells's Outline of History—expresses disagreement with the author. Mr. Putnam finds fault with the absence of any answers to charges made against unions. Why, he asks, do they not incorporate; or expel members for criminal activity; or leave unmolested those workers who prefer not to join unions; or increase instead of decreasing production? Such questions are not answered directly. But the author's general attitude is thus expressed:

"It may be argued that I have seen only those things in the labor movement that I wanted to see. That would not be true. I am not unaware of the shortcomings of the labor movement. I know but too well its frequent narrowmindedness, its bickerings, its squabbles, its internal politics, its lack of social foresight, its jurisdictional disputes and the tendencies that have made possible the New York city building scandals. I have described what seemed to me to be the significant and meaningful facts and forces in the labor movement. That does not mean that I am blind to opposing more destructive and less social elements than those which I have considered. Simply they do not seem to me as important or as deep ingrained in the character of the labor movement."

There is more than a hint of Lincoln's "house divided" passage in one paragraph in which this author presents what he believes to be the simple issue, thus:

"There is apparently only one possible outcome—either the workers will achieve complete security by eliminating the profit motive or the business community will destroy the labor movement and get back for itself the absolute economic freedom which it enjoyed soon after the industrial revolution. To achieve this freedom for the business community seems at present a visionary and, as will be made clearer by some of the other chapters of the book, a hopeless dream. The labor movement which began as a defence against insecurity operates as a means of stabilizing a dynamic world without destroying its dynamic character and seems destined to achieve complete control of the industrial functions of the community by substituting service for profit in industrial enterprise—and with service introducing democracy into industry."

This introduction of control by the workers is to be brought about through gradual education of men in their own powers and duties, the development of a new psychological attitude:

"The method of the labor movement is to make the function of an industrial group a conscious group function. The problems of sanitation, of hiring and firing, of the hours of labor, of the speed with which the workers work, of apprenticeship, often of the machine used, become subjects of controversy, discussion, agitation and control. The workers thus develop interest in their function, in their industry. The physical cooperation is strengthened by a spiritual one, by a conscious interest in the same problem and a constant desire for the assertion of the group opinion. It is this fact that makes organized labor so powerfully creative and constructive in character."

The basis of the plea made on behalf of the worker is that in his union activities he is really performing a great conservative function. The coming of machinery has effected a profound revolution. All the relationships of society needed readjusting. The personal situation of the worker is fundamentally changed since the day of handicraft and the small farm tilled by hand. The tendency is to merge the employee with the machine, without leaving him any room for invention or initiative. As the author says, "All men are in their own spontaneous ways artists and creators, and the curse of the machine is that it standardizes thought and kills it, standardizes emotion and destroys it, standardizes the artistic sense and annihilates it."

Frank Tannenbaum.

It is odd to find a Tannenbaum echoing the accents of a Ruskin. But he does not ask that handicraft be restored. He accepts the machine and demands that workers control it.

"The control of the machine is the root problem of the labor movement. The labor movement is but the political expression of a new centre of social gravity. Where men used to have land or commerce in common they now have the machine, and as the feudal organization represented the expression of the dominance of land, as capitalism represented and represents the dominance of commerce—so the labor movement is the blind and unplanned readjustment of men to a new economic centre of gravity. This force is all powerful. It *makes* the labor movement. The labor movement is the result, and the machine is the major cause. The difference in the character of the machine goes far to account for the difference in the political manifestation of the workers, just as capitalism represented a difference from feudalism."

The author is intelligent enough to see that if control of production is to be in the hands of the many there must be a far higher level of education, and he insists upon that as one of the essentials in the new world. He holds that all youth should be compelled to attend school to the age of eighteen. And he would have school lay a broad foundation for a happy, well-balanced life. The ideal, he holds, is "not early standardization and specialization but rather the development of a rounded and complete individual capable of adaptation to any special function with the least amount of friction and effort."

The quotations given suggest the spirit and attitude of the author. It should be added that the book is full of information as to the union structure. There are chapters on industrial government, which is treated under the heads of district council, industrial union and national unit; on work and wages; on cooperation and discipline and on other topics of the kind. An attempt is made to outline the relation between—or rather the unity of—producer and consumer in the completely organized democracy of labor.

The individual is the key

HUMAN BEHAVIOR. By Stuart Paton. Charles Scribner's Sons.

IN his preface Dr. Stuart Paton says that intelligent thinkers are now confronted with the problem of "making democracy safe for the world." The wise men of the past were the theorists, and framed their creeds or their social philosophies on the assumption that all mankind were, like themselves, governed by the sway of reason. Theology set limits to speculations and denied the kinship of man with the lower animals, upon which superstructure the scientist is building his knowledge of the human mind.

Dr. Paton believes that the key to all problems of humanity can be found in studying the individual. Through this method he hopes to bring about a better social system and the abolition of war. His book is a summary of the results achieved by the scientific study of the race, and he believes that we are on the threshold of new knowledge which will show us more completely just how the wheels go around. He regards it as no light thing to have thrown overboard the mediæval doctrines and the abstract philosophies which stood in the way of investigation. More has been learned about the workings of the mind in the last half century than in all preceding time. However, Dr. Paton notes one defect in the viewpoint of those who have opened up new vistas, and that is the fact that very frequently one cannot see the forest for the trees. It is the defect of specialization that any specialist will overemphasize the factors which he has studied and simplify the human equation so as to exclude all other subjects from his contemplation. It is the fable of the blind men and the elephant all over again.

Though Dr. Paton gives many details of the newer methods, and employs an excess of technical terms, he succeeds in his main object, which is to give a broad and comprehensive account of discoveries in this new field. He employs emphasis wisely, so that the lay reader will not confuse the mountains and the molehills in the landscape. This book should be read by every one who wants the light of the newest research upon the psychology of man. The author explains the mechanism of thought and touches upon the unconscious, that new realm of mental inquiry which we are just beginning to understand. He emphasizes over and over again the fact that each one of us is the epitome and product of countless centuries of evolution, and that in ways which we proudly try to overlook we are related to the primates and even to the humble amœba.

In giving the substance of the newest discoveries, Dr. Paton is, on the whole, very conservative. He does not venture to indorse any suggestion which has not been carefully tested, and this caution is rather disappointing in a book which hopes for so much from the study of the individual. If he has hazarded few statements which may seem ridiculous to the scientist of the future, he has also missed his chance to utter a prophetic message. He is very up to date, and he uses the conscientious objector and the artists of the new school to illustrate some of his theories of neurosis.

A Socialist on Lenin

FROM MARX TO LENIN. By Morris Hillquit. New York: The Hanford Press.

MORRIS HILLQUIT is one of the most practical of Socialists. He keeps to the middle of the road. He is not doctrinaire, nor yet too much the victim of expediency. He has been startled by the events in Russia. He withholds judgment until he sees how the thing works out. Meanwhile he is acutely conscious of the problems which the Soviets have created for radicals in other countries. He says: "The object of this booklet is to clarify the main issues and problems of the present day Socialist movement."

The most important point that he makes is that the Socialists were astonished by recent events. He says, "The Socialist world was not prepared for a social revolution in Russia. The event came to it as a startling surprise. It upset its theories and threw confusion into its ranks. The Russian revolution was utterly out of keeping with the conception of social evolution which dominated the international Socialist movement before the war. It developed a complex of new social institutions substantially at variance with those prevailing or anticipated in other countries, and this divergence of concrete material and political conditions, rather than mere theoretical and temperamental differences that lie at the bottom of the heated discussions in the ranks of the present day Socialist movement."

The attitude taken by many members of the party is that of the incredulous farmer in the presence of the giraffe. Mr. Hillquit summarizes the indispensable conditions of a Socialist revolution as understood by the Marxian school of Socialism. He winds up by saying, "According to all accepted Marxian tests, Russia was entirely unprepared for a Socialist revolution."

He reflects, without indorsing the resentment of the theorist. He says, "From the point of view of the conventional Marxian historian the Russian revolution may be described as the illegitimate child of Asiatic Russia and European Socialism. It was not born in lawful Marxian wedlock, and this taint upon its birth has given rise to curious contentions in opposite Socialist camps." He realizes that the success of this experiment will redound to the credit of all radical movements. He says, "The principal contribution of Soviet Russia has been to borrow a pithy expression from Marx, 'its own working existence.' The fact of the workers' and peasants' republic in the largest country of Europe has forever destroyed the superstitious and unreasoning belief that the capitalist order of society is unalterable and eternal. With one blow it has transferred the Socialist ideal from the abstract and speculative realms of Utopia to the solid ground of reality."

Mr. Hillquit gives a good explanation of how the revolution occurred in Russia. His summary of the underlying causes is a masterly bit of analysis. He does not feel that it is his place to defend the Bolshevik regime, but he counters the argument that violence is employed by an excellent tu quoque directed against the blood lust of the reactionaries.

As a man of sound legal training Mr. Hillquit prefers a parliamentary system to a Soviet. He says, "The Socialists of the pre-war period read the phrase of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, with the emphasis on proletariat rather than on dictatorship." He realizes that the Bolsheviki in power do not believe that a Socialist Russia can stand alone amidst a non-Socialist world, but he resents their effort to dictate terms to the Third Internationale. His polemic against bigotry should be taken to heart by all those who wish to advance any given cause.

Paris reads Alpine fantasy

By PANAME.

"LES DIEUX TREMBLENT," by Marcel Berger (Albin Michel: Paris), is a French nightmare. It does not create the mood of strange, impersonal tragedy characteristic of Slav or Scandinavian tales. It is clear, logical, well constructed—a nightmare planned and willed! The swift and simple style appropriate to moving narrative never suggests horror; but the suave exterior hides the very springs of anguish.

The setting is in Switzerland, at the summit of a mountain, an ancient fortified castle transformed into a palace of nations. Before the entrance stand exotic trees with deadly fruits whose poison rouses in its victims, before killing them, a curious exaltation.

The guests are the gods the war has given to the world: its leaders, its beneficiaries, its parasites. There

Marcel Berger.

are found with the French, a Russian, a German, an Austrian, an Englishman, an Italian.

The heavy atmosphere of cosmopolitan luxury serves to bring out in more violent contrasts the reminders of the sacrifices of the war expressed by the tubercular Philip de la Roche-Aymon. The inception of monstrous crimes rises like a sinister mist through which one feels the approach of an avenging madness more and more menacing. At the heart of all this, Love and Death play their old melodrama. Then Death rushes forward, fills all the stage, snatches the masks from the faces of the fallen.

It is evening. A banquet brings together the guests of the palace. Magnificent, fantastic illuminations, diabolical music, modern dances, drinks of endless variety and fearfully potent. They played with life, they amused themselves upon the brink of fate.

One of the guests, Philip de la Roche-Aymon, meets upon this Oberland height a novelist friend from Paris. With the prophetic power of one condemned to die young Philip sees the true nature of all those about him—officers, diplomats, manufacturers, the poet, the singer, the demimondaine, the ingenue, who are all quickened into a mood of absolute recklessness. He seeks to prove their ignominy to his friend. The liqueurs are brought and he cleverly turns the talk into a series of personal confessions.

The conquering general recalled his inexorable orders and the foundation of dead bodies upon which the structure of his fame was built. The poet, Titto Vertesco, animating spirit of war, lived over those glorious days when the power of his word plunged his people into the melee. "Without the war," he explained, "I should have been obliged to repeat myself, I should have remained a singer of passion, like so many others. . . . Posterity will render me no account for the poor creatures who fell, for without me they would have come to a less noble end. Posterity will call me to account only for the use of my genius."

Then the Grand Duke Feodor, drunker than anybody else, tells of the circumstances that let loose the furies. "He had seen with his own eyes, one evening, lying in the corner of his Cousin Nicholas's office, the order of Russian demobilization. But the secretary who ought to have transmitted it was away. The next morning nobody could lay hands on it. 'And do you know where I found it, two months later? In my pocket!'"

One amazing avowal followed another. The director of the Austrian Council told how, fearing lest the conciliatory answer of Serbia would prevent war, had read it to Count Berchtold only after a dinner with much wine, and he altered the sense of the document by the expression of his voice.

The parvenu enriched by the massacre said to his wife: "Show them your Verdun necklace!" The least repellant of the guests was the coward who had evaded service to please his wife.

Philip assumed the air of a judge meditating a terrible sentence. He became also the executioner, mixing poison in the chartreuse of all the company save his friend, the novelist who lived to tell the tale.

The scenes that follow are Dantesque. In their death agony the characters reveal themselves, each dying as he had lived. As in Olympus, destroyed by the Titans, Zeus wielded his thunder and Poseidon his trident, so each of these "gods" brandished the symbol of his power and the last gesture of the life survived in the abandoned clay.

The bankers held out their check books, the General fought like a soldier, the poet surveyed the drama with artistic appreciation, understood all and cried, "Let a new religion be born. There are now millions of Christs before whom we ought to prostrate ourselves and beseech pardon." And to the German, who refused to repent, he said:

"So be it. You may thus achieve greatness. . . . But in that case I demand of you absolute self-control. Let not a murmur escape your lips. For its echo will answer you from the vast choir of your victims." And he leaped into the precipice, arms extended and head raised to the stars.

The bad dream is ended, one closes the book, eager to escape from such a catastrophe, although when one has read from the beginning the impression steadily grows and holds the interest throughout. And one must needs reflect a moment upon the meaning of it all, like the poet Titto Vertesco, who cried with his last breath to Philip:

"Mad thou wert! What means madness, wiser than their impious reason? I feel myself becoming thy disciple." And no doubt the author intends that his readers shall make those words their own. And that is the explanation of the work. A Frenchman rarely writes a dream for the dream's sake. This is done to call back vehemently the years that can never be atoned for whose memory troubles too little those who made war while they heaped wealth—or who incited others to fight.

"The Gods Tremble" takes rank in that cycle of divine pity and noble rage whose best expressions are "Under Fire" and "Clarté" by Barbusse, "Wooden Crosses" by Dorgeles, "The Life of Martyrs" by George Duhamel, "Percée" by Bernier and "Men in War" by the Austrian Latzko. And one recalls sadly the comrades of Barbusse, sunk in the mud of the battlefield, whose last misery is the thought that their suffering is in vain since men are "machines that forget."

Marcel Berger's book has been presented at Fast's on the Rue Royale at the third soirée of the *Amis des Lettres Francaises*, by J. H. Rosny the elder, President of the Academie Goncourt. It drew forth a hearty response and is certainly one of the best novels of its author—and of our time. It is dedicated "To My Wife. May she bring good fortune to this book as she has brought good fortune to my life." I think the wish will be fulfilled.

Post-Prandial

UNACCUSTOMED AS I AM. By Morrie Ryskind. Alfred A. Knopf.

Reviewed by MELVILLE CANE.

This is the first book of verses by Mr. Ryskind, known as "Morrie" to the readers of F. P. A.'s column, in which many of his rhymes originally appeared. He is one of the latest of the long line of adapters of Horace and treats him not in the delicately polished manner of the Victorian writers of society verse, but rather in the racy Americanese of Eugene Field and Franklin P. Adams. In fact, there are at times suggestions of re-echoes from the Sabine farm.

The Horatian pieces, however, form but a part of a varied collection, of which perhaps the best and most characteristic is "Adelaide."

Blow, bugles, blow for Adelaide!
Pay ye the tribute that I owe her;
For though I dine with that there maid,
It's Dutch; she will not let me blow her.

And since somebody ought to do it,
I pray ye, bugles, please go to it!

Happily impudent is the knock-about parody of Untermeyer's "Irony."

Louis, I've listened to your shout
And—here's the way I dope it out:
The bit of earth, the senseless stone,
Do nothing that they dare not own.
The grain of dust (compare line five)
You say will always be alive
Has never told a single lie—
Why should it die?

The grass that grows so green to-day
Has always gone the righteous way.
The brook that flows eternally
Has never been upon a spree.
The sands, the hillside and the dale
Have never told a naughty tale—
But Man!—he swears and drinks and smokes—
And so he croaks.